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Roosevelt, Franklin

Dellano

Agriculture

New York

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# AGRICULTURE



*What Is Wrong*  
*and*  
*What To Do About It*



Governor  
Franklin D. Roosevelt's  
Speech  
at Topeka, Kansas  
September 14,  
1932

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*Issued by*

THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE  
Hotel Biltmore, New York City

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IT is a privilege to be back here again. So far we have had an auspicious trip. Yesterday we heard from the State of Maine, and in November we shall hear in even greater measures from the State of Kansas.

I have come here, not alone to talk to you about farms and farming. I have come just as much and even more, to listen and to learn. On this whole trip I am seeking, as on many previous occasions, first-hand contact with that section of the nation which is responsible for the major part of the food supply of the nation. And, in my contacts, and in the discussions I have, I want to hear from men and women of all parties, men and women of all views on the questions and the problems of farm-relief.

I am going to follow one simple principle in this discussion, and that is, a complete and absolute frankness. This question of ours is too serious to be trifled with by empty political platitudes, or by special and ingenious tricks of language or of thought. In dealing with the subject, I want to avoid, on the one hand, political sky-writing, and on the other hand, political wise-cracking.

In keeping pace with this principle of getting down to business let me say what I think we all recognize: That there is no single remedy that will by itself bring immediate prosperity to the agricultural population of all parts of the United States. You know that and I know that and it is a good point to start from.

I KNOW personally for four reasons: First, I lived on a farm in the State of New York for fifty years. Second, I ran a farm in the State of Georgia for eight years. Third, ever since I went into public life I have

made it a point to travel over the country and in so doing I have maintained what I think modesty will permit me to say is at least a genuine and practical interest in the farm problem of the various parts of the country at first hand. Finally, as Governor of the State of New York, the farm products of which, by the way, rank fifth or sixth among all the 48 States of the Union, I have in four years devoted myself to building a farm program of which the people of my State, regardless of party, have some reason to be proud.

Four years ago in the campaign for the Governorship the thought was publicly expressed that even though New York is known as a State primarily urban yet its own farm problems were of immediate and critical importance. Some of the distress that you and the Middle West as a whole have felt was present in many parts of the country in the same acute form. Without indulging in excessive promises I assured the

farmers of New York that their problems would be met by practical and definite action and I stress the word "action." In the creation of a State plan I recognized the principle of bringing more than one mind to bear upon the problem, and of putting more than one shoulder to the wheel. Not alone through the process of appointing commissions and calling conferences, but by the actual enactment of practical legislation, we have built up our policies. In the years that followed we have accomplished many substantial things. They are set forth in the record. Existing tax obligations of local communities were lightened to the tune of twenty-four million dollars a year. State aid for roads was redistributed on a mileage basis instead of on an assessment basis, so that the rural communities could enjoy exactly the same privileges in the improvement of their dirt roads as that given to the richer suburban communities.

AND the same principles of aid were applied to rural schools in order to guarantee a modern education for the children of farmers even in the most sparsely settled communities. The State assumed the entire cost of constructing and reconstructing the roads on the rural highway system, thus lifting another heavy burden from farm property. The State paid all except a very small fraction of the cost of grade-crossing elimination so that safety might be afforded to the less as well as the more fortunate districts of the State. Appropriations for the safe-guarding of rural health were increased and provision of funds for soil survey were made, and this is already paying substantial dividends in more profitable farming, in its aid to our State reforestation program and in enabling the farmers to get necessary improvements in the way of telephone lines and electric power lines. In addition to that, the laws relating to co-operative corporations and traffic in farm produce were revised and strengthened in the interest of the farmer. Very recently, legislation was enacted to create a new system of rural credit organizations to meet the emergency created by the collapse of rural banks.

Why do I tell you all that? I cite those examples to illustrate the many angles that attended the building up of the program. And the lesson of it all, the lesson in every State in the Union, is that there is no single cure-all, but that progress comes from comprehension of many factors and a sincere and honest attempt to move forward along many lines at the same time.

I see no occasion for doing the obvious. I see no occasion for discussing in detail the acute distress in which the farmers of America find themselves. You all

know that better than anyone can tell you. You have felt it in your own lives and experiences, and you have seen it reflected in limiting the opportunities that you have wanted to give to your families.

This experience of yours is far more moving than any phrases of mine or of anyone else. This distress has grown for many years over a radius of hundreds of miles from where I stand, in as productive and fertile a country as the world has ever seen. We have poverty and we have want in the midst of abundance. With incomparable natural wealth within the reach of these progressive farmers, they struggled with poverty and unbelievably hard times. They tried to hold their farms under conditions produced by falling prices for corn, for hogs, for cotton, and for wool, and cattle and wheat. They received prices as low or lower than at any time in the history of the United States.

THERE has been some slight rise from these low levels, but, in spite of that, there remains in millions of farm homes continuing uncertainty, continuing apprehension. That means that the farmer misses

Present	not only the things that make life tolerable, but those things that make
Distress	decent living possible. It means—and this is most important—that the

farmers' children must suffer a denial of those chances for education that justice and fairness should assure to them. We all of us hoped that our children would have a better break than we had. But the economic turn has almost blasted that hope for the farm parent. It means nothing less than the shadow of peasantry. There are six and a half million farm families to whom this deepening shadow is a reality. These six and a half million families represent twenty-two percent of the total population of the United States. They are the men, the women and the children actually living on farms and it is fair to ask what percentage of the national income comes each year to this twenty-two percent of the population. Let us remember these figures: Twelve years ago, in 1920, this twenty-two percent of the population got fifteen percent of the national income; in 1925 it received eleven percent. By 1928 agriculture's share had dropped to just about nine percent, and the most recent estimates based on the figures of the United States Department of Agriculture itself, show that farm income today has dropped to about seven percent.

REMEMBER well that during the past four years—when he has been the Chief Executive of the nation, and also as a member of the Cabinet during the

previous six years, the dominant factor in our governmental economic policies has been the distinguished gentleman who is running against me.

**The** But let us not stop with our six and a  
**President's** half million farm families. Let us  
**Responsibility** remember, too, that fifty million men, women and children immediately within our borders are directly concerned with the present and future of agriculture.

Again let us not stop there. Another fifty or sixty million people who are engaged in business and industry in our large and small civic communities are at last coming to understand the simple fact that their lives, and their futures, are also profoundly concerned with the prosperity of agriculture. They realize more and more that there will be no outlet for their products unless their fifty million fellow Americans who are directly concerned with agriculture are given the buying power to buy city products.

Yes, our economic life today is a seamless web. Whatever our vocation, we are forced to recognize that while we have enough factories and enough machines in the United States to supply all our needs, these factories will be closed part of the time and the machines will lie idle part of the time if the buying power of the fifty million people within our borders remains restricted or dead, as it is today. I pointed out in my speech of acceptance the interdependence of the people of the United States—the fact that we cannot have independence in its true sense unless we take full account of our interdependence in order to provide a balance of economic well-being for every section of the country and the inhabitants thereof. Industrial prosperity can reach only artificial and temporary heights as it did in 1929, if at the same time there is no agricultural prosperity. My friends, this nation cannot endure if it is half boom and half broke.

That word, interdependence, applies not only to the city on the one hand and the farm on the other, but it applies also to the relationship between the different parts of the country. If, in the South a cotton raising population goes into bankruptcy because the price of cotton is so low that it does not pay for the cost of production, you in the wheat belt, or in the corn belt, are directly affected by a tragedy that is going on a thousand miles away.

Every factory, every industrial center, in every part of the country is directly affected by your distress. Interdependency within the field of agriculture itself, is a vital factor. Every kind of farming is related to every other kind and a disturbance anywhere within the structure causes repercussions everywhere.

**I**F we will get back to the root of the difficulty, we will find that it is in the present lack of equality for agriculture. Farming has not had an even break in our economic system. The things that our farmers buy today cost nine percent more than they did before the World War, before 1914. The things they sell bring to them forty-three percent less than then. These figures, as of August

1st, authenticated by the Department of Agriculture, mean that the farm dollar is worth less than half of what it represented before the war. Remember this, my friends: The things that farmers buy, protected by Mr. Grundy's tariff, are nine percent above what they were before the war, and the things that farmers sell (and remember world prices fix domestic prices) are forty-three percent below pre-war prices. The correction of that condition must in some way bring the purchasing power of the farmer within the reach of the things which Mr. Grundy has protected.

It means finding a cure for the condition that compels the farmer to trade in 1932 two wagon loads for the things for which in 1914 he traded one wagon load. And that is as short a way, as I know, of stating the farm problem.

There are two undeniable historic facts during these past twelve years:

First, the present administration and the two previous administrations, in all of which our present President was an important member, failed utterly to understand the farm problem as a national whole, or to plan for its relief; and, second, they destroyed the foreign markets for our exportable farm surplus, beginning with the Fordney-McCumber tariff and ending with the Grundy tariff, thus violating the simple principles of international trade and forcing the retaliation of the other nations of the world.

**I** CANNOT forbear at this point from expressing my amazement that in the face of this retaliation—inevitable from the day that the Grundy tariff became a law and predicted by every competent observer at home and abroad—not one effective step to deal with it or to alleviate its consequences has been taken or even proposed by the national administration. In that attitude the Republican leadership, from the President down, shows an incredible disregard of plain facts combined with what I shall politely term a stubborn indifference to the consequences of its own folly.

Of some of the steps which have been taken and should now be taken I have already spoken, and I shall have more to say. But at this moment I want to speak about the pressing problem of permanent farm

**Farm  
Dollar  
Low**

**The  
Grundy  
Tariff**

relief. Let us pause for a moment for a view of the problem from its longer perspective. I am coming to the shorter perspective later on.

Let us pause to assert with all possible emphasis the need of national planning in agriculture. We must not have, as now, the scattering of our efforts through the heterogeneous and disassociated activities of the government in dealing with the problem. On the other hand we must avoid the present tendency to jump, to rush from one temporary expedient to another. We need unity of planning, coherence in our administration and emphasis on cures rather than on drugs.

On my part, I suggest the following permanent measures:

**F**IRST, I would reorganize the Department of Agriculture, and I would do it with the purpose of building up a program of national planning. I should be the last person in the world to become a harsh and a thoughtless critic of a department

**Permanent** which has done many good things.  
**Relief** But I know enough of government

and the ways of government—for I spent eight long years in Washington—to know that the growth of a department is often irregular, illogical and haphazard. It is always easy to add to a department; for additions mean more jobs; but to cut away unnecessary functions, eliminate useless jobs, or re-direct routine activities towards more fruitful purposes is a task that must and shall be undertaken.

Second, I favor a definite policy looking toward the planned use of land. We already have enough tilled land in this nation to meet our needs for many years to come, since our population has ceased to expand so rapidly and agriculture is becoming year by year more efficient.

But we have in the thirteen original states of the East, and a few others, great areas of relatively poor land hardly worth cultivation that provide in themselves actual or potential competition with better land, and that, my friends, is why a national plan for the East affects you people in the West. We are all brothers when it comes down to the last analysis. The competition of poor, unfit marginal land lowers the quality of farm products, depresses the prices of better farm products, creates great added expense because of the faulty distribution of population and consumes public and private resources in attempting it. The sum total of the use of this land is waste and hardship. To provide for the necessary guidance for the correcting of this faulty distribution of farms and farming energy, there is need for an economic soil survey, especially in the Eastern states, to be carried on jointly by the nation and by the States themselves, through the initiation of the Federal Government. That soil

survey should have a much broader scope than present surveys, and should be directed toward the problems of proper utilization of the land and the future distribution of population along sound economic lines. It should lead to mapping and classification of land of all kinds to determine which lands are best suited for agricultural production, which lands are marginal, and which are suitable only to the growing of tree crops.

**L**ET me give you this simple example of something I have already done. Remember, at the same time, that this does not apply to the wheat belt, and it applies in smaller measure to the corn belt. But it does apply to most of the Eastern States.

**New York** We in the State of New York have approved, by vote of the people, the expenditure of ten millions of dollars

**Results** towards the elimination of marginal lands from actual farming, and this year, in the recent short time alone, we have bought, as a State, over 200,000 acres of unprofitable marginal farm lands, and have turned these acres into the growing of trees for lumber and pulp. I do not have to point out to you the fact that this Eastern program is not only good for the East, but it is also of value in that it removes the competition of marginal hill crops from your own crops in the West.

Planning of that kind, and then carrying out the plan helps to gain a better and less wasteful distribution of agricultural effort, and inevitably will point the way to readjustments in the distribution of the population in general. The pendulum is swinging back from intensive concentration of population in the large cities. We know the possibilities for greater ease and comfort in modern rural and small town living. That does not mean a "back to the land" movement in the ordinary sense of a return to agriculture, but it does mean definite efforts to decentralize industries. It will promote decent and wholesome living for millions of the population, and it will mean to the farmer bringing a considerable part of his market nearer to his own door-yard. And that is worth-while.

**A** THIRD process of permanent relief of agriculture will come in the reduction and more equitable distribution of taxes. I guess we are all agreed on that. With respect to that I propose to exert—I said

**Lower** propose to exert through the Presidency, as I have done through the  
**Taxes** Governorship, every bit of influence that I can in favor of a national movement to reorganize local government in the direction of eliminating a large part of the tax burden that now bears so heavily on the farmers of the nation. We have too many tax districts, too many local units of govern-

relief. Let us pause for a moment for a view of the problem from its longer perspective. I am coming to the shorter perspective later on.

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**New York Results**

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**A** THIRD process of permanent relief of agriculture will come in the reduction and more equitable distribution of taxes. I guess we are all agreed on that. With respect to that I propose to exert—I said propose to exert through the Presidency, as I have done through the Governorship, every bit of influence that I can in favor of a national movement to reorganize local government in the direction of eliminating a large part of the tax burden that now bears so heavily on the farmers of the nation. We have too many tax districts, too many local units of govern-



ment, too many unnecessary functions and too many offices—governmental underbrush that has been sprouting for years unheeded. We are going after it with a brush hook. And in addition to that, we need a clearer separation of the fields of taxation—the field of the nation, of the states and of localities. By so doing we can lift more of the tax burden resting on land, and I mean to stress that objective by every means at my command. These three objectives, my friends, are of the sort that will require slow moving development. Don't let's promise what we cannot accomplish. They constitute a necessary building for the future.

**I**N meeting the immediate problems of distress it is necessary to adopt quick-acting remedies. In the first place, there is the necessity, as we all know, for the better financing of farm mortgages, in order to

**Quick Remedies** relieve the burden of excessive interest charges and the grim threat of foreclosure. Much was done in the last session of Congress to extend and liquefy and pass on to the Federal Government a portion of the debt of railroads, the debt of banks, the debt of utilities and the debt of industry in general. Something, indeed, in the nature of a gesture was made in the financing of urban and suburban homes. But practically nothing was done towards removing the destructive menace of debt from farm homes.

It is my purpose when elected to direct all the energies of which I am capable to definite projects to relieve that distress, and specifically I am prepared to insist that Federal credit be extended to banks, insurance companies, loan companies and other companies or corporations that hold farm mortgages among their assets; but that these credits must be made on the condition that every reasonable assistance be given to the mortgagors where the loans are sound, for the purpose of preventing foreclosure. And those conditions must be enforced. Yes, lower interest rates and an extension of principal payments will save thousands of farms throughout this nation for their owners. And hand in hand with that, my friends, we must adopt the definite policy of giving those who have lost the title to their farms—titles now held by institutions seeking credit from government agencies—the preferred opportunity of getting their property back.

**T**HE second immediate necessity is to provide a means of bringing about through government effort, a substantial reduction in the difference between the

**Tariff Relief** prices of things the farmer sells and the things the farmer buys. One way of correcting that disparity is by restoring international trade through tariff readjustments.

You have read the Democratic platform, some of you; you have heard me talk about it, some of you. Here's some more about it. The Democratic tariff policy consists in large measure in negotiating agreements with individual countries, permitting them to sell goods to us, in return for which they will let us sell to them goods and crops which we produce. The effective application of that principle will restore the flow of international trade and the first result of that flow will be to assist substantially the American farmer in disposing of his surplus. But it is recognized that to take up the slack until international trade is completely restored—that may mean several years; you cannot put through a new tariff negotiation in a few years—until we take up that slack we must devise means to provide for the farmer a benefit that will give him in the shortest possible time the equivalent of what the protected manufacturer gets from the tariff. You farmers put this well in a single phrase—"We must make the tariff effective."

**I** DON'T need to tell you that in the last few years many plans have been devised for achieving that object. None has been given a trial. Circumstances are so complex that no man can say, with definite assur-

**Farm Surpluses** ance, that one particular plan is applicable to all crops, or even that one plan is better than another in relation to an individual crop. One fact

I want to make clear with all possible emphasis, because I believe in telling the truth: There is no reason to despair merely because defects have been found by some people in all these plans, or because some of them have been discarded by responsible leaders in favor of new plans. The fact that so much earnest study and investigation of this problem has been made from so many angles and by so many men is, in my opinion, grounds for assurance rather than despair. Such a wealth of information has been accumulated, so many possibilities explored, so many able minds enlisted, and more important still, so much education on the subject provided for, and by the farmers themselves, that the time has come when able and thoughtful leaders who have followed this development from the beginning are now focusing on the basic elements of the problem, the practical nature of its solution, and are ready to put the thing through.

Within the past year, many of our principal industrialists also have come to the conclusion since the great decline of our export trade, that the chief hope for industrial rehabilitation lies in a workable and important method of dealing with the farm surpluses. Support for the trial of some plan to put the tariff into effect seems to be found, my friends, everywhere except in the administration at Washington. And it is

that official lack of sympathy that has probably done more to prevent the development of concrete, generally acceptable plans than any single force.

**T**O me it appears that the administration takes the attitude of the ostrich. It says in substance that since a perfect plan has not developed nothing can be done. And at the same time it takes a position wholly inimical to every effort made during the past eleven years to provide workable means of relief. This negative position taken by the Administration is more than a mere failure to assume leadership. It is absolute repudiation of responsibility. This negative—even hostile—position has included, as we know, a disposition on the part of the Administration to set the proponents of one plan off against the proponents of another plan, the apparent object being to create a situation in which it is possible for the Administration leadership to say to you: "How can we do anything for agriculture when it has not agreed within itself as to what it wants to do?"

It will be my purpose to compose the conflicting elements of these various plans, to gather the benefit of the long study and consideration of them, to co-ordinate efforts to the end that agreement may be reached upon the details of a distinct policy aimed at producing the result to which all these efforts and plans are directed, the restoration of agriculture to economic equality with other industry within the United States. Somebody said to me the other day: "How do you propose to get an agreement?" Well, I may go back to the way I used to do it in the Navy Department when I had officers, or when I had labor representatives who were in disagreement. I would get them in my office and sit them down together. Then I would say to them: "Gentlemen, we have a problem to solve which is of common concern to all of you. You have not come to an agreement. I am going out to lunch. And I am going to lock you in, and when you get hungry all you have to do is to certify that you have come to an agreement."

The purpose is the restoration of agriculture to economic equality with other industries within the United States. I say to give to that portion of the crop consumed in the United States a benefit equivalent to a tariff sufficient to give you farmers an adequate price. And that is clear.

Now I want to state what seems to me to be specifications, upon which most of the reasonable leaders of agriculture have agreed, and to express here and now my whole-hearted accord with those specifications.

**F**IRST, the plan must provide for the producer of staple surplus commodities such as wheat, cotton, corn (in the form of hogs) and tobacco, a tariff benefit over world prices which is equivalent to the benefit given by the tariff to industrial products, and that differential benefit must be so applied that the increase in the farm income purchasing and debt-paying power will not stimulate further production, additional production.

Second, the plan must finance itself. Agriculture has at no time sought and does not seek any such access to the public treasury as was provided by the futile and costly attempts at price stabilization by the Federal Farm Board. We seek only equality of opportunity and tariff productive industry and that's all.

Third, it must not make use of any mechanism which would cause our European customers to retaliate on the ground of dumping. It must be based on making the tariff effective and direct in its operation.

Fourth, it must make use of existing agencies, and so far as possible, be decentralized in its administration so that the chief responsibility for its success will rest with the localities of this country rather than with created bureaucratic machinery in Washington, D. C.

Fifth, it must operate as nearly as possible on a co-operative basis and its effect must be to enhance and strengthen a co-operative movement. It should, moreover, be constituted so that it can be withdrawn whenever the emergency is passed and whenever normal foreign markets have been re-established.

Sixth, this plan must be, insofar as possible, voluntary. I like the idea that the plan should not be put into operation unless it has the support of a large, reasonable proportion of the producers of the exportable commodities, to which it is to apply. It must be so organized that the benefits will go to the man who participates.

**T**HIS, my friends, seems to be the essential specifications of a workable plan. In determining the details necessary to the solution of so vast a problem, it goes without saying that many minds must meet and many persons must work together. To Such co-operation must, of necessity, come from those who have had the widest experience with the problem, and who enjoy to the greatest degree the confidence of the farmers of the nation. Without in any sense seeking to avoid responsibility, I shall avail myself of the widest possible range of such assistance. My willingness to do this is fully attested by the extent to which the development of our agricul-

**To Consult  
Farm  
Leaders**

tural program in New York has been brought about through the assistance given to me on a non-partisan, non-paid basis by the leaders of agriculture of my own state.

That co-operation and advice which was received in New York came not only from those directly interested in agriculture but from the leaders in the Legislature as well, and, by the way, this is a Republican Legislature. There were there, in that Legislature, as there are in the Congress of the United States, far-sighted public servants, Republicans and Democrats; servants of the people who were willing to put the welfare of agriculture and of the country as a whole ahead of mere party advantage. To such leaders in all parties I look for guidance, for good-will and for support. After all, the farmers' hope for the future must rest essentially on the policy and the spirit in which his case is considered. His problem is one of difficulty. It is for him to decide whether he wants the solution of that problem to be committed to leaders who are determined to relieve the inequities that have caused his distress, or to leaders whose record clearly shows that they are determined to preserve a staggering subsidy, but to give to agriculture only a measure of words and yet more words.

THE essence of this question comes down to a matter of keeping faith with American agriculture. On my part I can stand on my own record and on the policies I have just set forth. But we have examined

#### Keeping Faith

only half the record, although I am more than half way through my talk. On the opposition side you have the long record of the present administration. In setting forth that record you know better than I do that the farmer's hope has had to rest on the policy and the spirit in which his case was considered by his government. We can fully test the policy and the spirit of the present administration. It runs back a long time, because those leaders have held public office for a long time. In those offices, they have had ample opportunity to demonstrate their attitude toward agriculture.

I am not going back to the Dark Ages. I am going back just to 1921. When the depression in agriculture began that year, Republican leaders, first of all, sought to belittle the plight of agriculture. They claimed that the old familiar tariff remedy would suffice, and they offered the Fordney-McCumber tariff bill, passed for farm relief. The Republican leaders in positions of national responsibility at that time, and this, of course, includes the then Secretary of Commerce, either did not, or would not, realize the change in international conditions due to the change in the inter-

national debt situation. They closed their eyes to that outstanding economic fact.

PRIOR to the war we Americans had paid our interest on our debts to Europe by means of agricultural exports. That is clear. But after the war, because we had changed from a debtor to a creditor nation, and Europe was in debt to us, it was necessary that we demand either goods or gold in return. The Fordney-McCumber tariff barrier shut off the normal tide of trade. Europe could not pay, so Europe could not buy, and specifically, Europeans began to stop buying our surplus farm products, and that is clear, too. To offset the harmful effects of that tariff situation, intelligent and responsible farm leaders, worked out, in 1929, what they called a program for equality for agriculture. Plans to achieve that equality for agriculture were brought before members of the President's Cabinet at that time. They moved in the direction of a Republican agricultural conference to consider it. The conference met. It took the amazing position that production should be reduced to the demands of the domestic market by the cheerful means, it appeared, of "starving out" the farmers, who had formerly exported to Europe. And it is a matter of common knowledge that the President, then the Secretary of Commerce, was not without influence in the determination of that result. In fact the conclusions of that grim agricultural conference were strikingly similar to those voiced by the Secretary of Commerce himself. For example, in 1925, he said: "Continuance of over-production means surplus, and that can only be corrected by prices low enough to make production unprofitable for some of the acreage of use."

Throughout the whole agricultural agony of the next few years, the Secretary of Commerce set himself like adamant against all relief proposals. Farm leaders suggested segregation of export surplus from the domestic market. With marked acerbity he stated in a letter that such a step would "subsidize the British Empire."

The McNary-Haugen legislation brought forth, as you and I know, not just plain vetoes, but violent and abusive veto messages. There was, to put it mildly, no protest from the then Secretary of Commerce. And another gentleman, the Secretary of the Treasury, in 1926, well phrased the attitude of the administration. He insisted that any attempt to raise domestic prices was a "subsidy," and he stated that: "If given to agricultural commodities, the government could not logically refuse to give the same treatment to the textile, boot and shoe, coal and other industries"—sublimely disregarding the plain fact that the tariff was already

giving those industries the highest subsidies they had ever had in history.

**N**OW to put forth, as the Secretary of Commerce said, the idea of limiting farm production to the domestic market was simply to threaten agriculture with a terrific penalty. Either he did not see, or he did not care, that this meant allowing wheat land in Kansas to remain idle, forcing foreclosing of farm mortgages, wrecking farm families, while our withdrawal from the world market principally benefited foreign producers.

He did not ask the manufacturers to reduce their exports. As Secretary of Commerce he made no fight for American agriculture's share of world trade, though he could find time, and lots of it, to assist foreign sales of every known agricultural product. In his campaign speeches in 1928, he offered merely a program of co-operative marketing and self-help. That was to be developed through a Farm Board as a means of handling the surplus. Although he should have known, as responsible farm leaders knew, that the co-operatives obviously could not undertake the burden of controlling the whole of the great surplus cut adrift by tariff barriers. He could, and should, have seen that they handled only a relatively small volume, and that it would be impossible for the members to shoulder the load and the cost. The idea of "stabilizing" through speculative operations was conceived and written into the platform of 1928, and was vigorously supported by the candidate for the Presidency. And you now know to your cost what stabilizing has meant in practice. We are very nearly through with stabilizing.

**M**EANWHILE the familiar old song of the benefits to be derived from the tariffs was heard. In 1928 in his acceptance speech, Mr. Hoover said: "An adequate tariff is the foundation of farm relief." He and his supporters insisted in 1928 that

**A Ghastly Fraud** we were importing \$3,300,000,000 worth of farm products, and that an adequate tariff laid on these would be sufficient for the relief of agriculture.

It was a ghastly fraud, as you know. Let us analyze: The principal items of agricultural imports were rubber, and silk, and coffee, and tea and the like—a long list of exotic and tropical goods, including such highly developed American farm products as elephants' tusks, skins of the Russian ermine, wallaby, and elks' hides. Now let us remember—\$3,300,000,000!

But the fact was that the imports of products competing with products grown in America amounted only to \$460,000,000; and sugar alone represented over

half of that figure. The truth was that our farmers did not produce the items proposed to be protected by tariffs. They consume them. Let's call a spade a spade. That "remedy" handed to the farmer was not to raise his selling price, but to raise his cost of living.

I take it that the process of education through hard knocks has gone far enough to make it unnecessary for me to comment further. The claim that the Republican discriminatory tariff methods are of benefit to the farmer has proven to be a cynical and pitiless fraud.

**S**HORTLY after his inauguration in 1929, the President assembled a special session of Congress. He went through the form of fulfilling his campaign promises by the passing of the agricultural marketing act, plus the Hawley-Smoot tariff.

**Farm Board Squandering** The decline of prices increased. A slump was apparent. The co-operatives alone could not meet the situation and the Farm Board began its stabilizing operations. That resulted in a tremendous undigested surplus overhanging the market; it put a millstone around the neck of the co-operatives. The effort resulted in squandering hundreds of millions of the taxpayers' money. I repeat that the Farm Board's speculative operations must and shall come to an end.

And then what was the next step? When the futility of maintaining the prices of wheat and cotton through so-called stabilization became apparent, the President's Farm Board, of which his Secretary of Agriculture was a member, invented the cruel joke of advising the farmers to allow twenty percent of their wheat lands to lie idle, to plow up every third row of cotton, and to shoot every tenth dairy cow. Surely they knew that his advice would not, indeed, could not, be taken. It was probably offered as the foundation of an alibi. They wanted to be able to say to the farmers of the United States: "Why, you did not do as we told you to. Now go blame yourselves."

And at last, after practically all the harm that could possibly be done has been done, the President's acceptance speech of 1932 fully recognizes the futility of the stabilizing experiment and merely apologizes for the results. In order to avoid responsibility, he claims this: that the Farm Board departed from its original purpose by making loans to farmers' co-operatives and to preserve prices from panic. It was his Farm Board. Why did he permit such a departure?

**I** HAVE read it three or four times, but let me tell you that the President's acceptance speech, with its artful excuses and its empty promises, will bear care-

ful reading by the farmers of the nation in the light of the promises made in 1928. I go so far as to express the pious hope that the Republican campaign organization will provide every farmer with a copy of the President's acceptance speech. I can imagine a farmer, whether it be here in the great State of Kansas, or whether it be in my own county of Dutchess, on the Hudson River, in the State of New York, sitting on his doorstep meditating on the questions that have caused him so much concern while he reads that speech.

The farmer asks the question:

"How may we expect that our exports will be restored? How may we expect that some way will be provided by which our customers may pay for our surplus produced with goods which we farmers can use?"

And he reads the answer in the acceptance speech: "I am squarely for a protective tariff."

"Does this," asks the farmer, "mean the Grundy tariff bill that you signed?"

The acceptance speech is silent on that point.

Again the farmer asks:

"Maybe the tariff can be made effective on farm produce consumed at home. Time after time the organized farmers of the United States and the friends of agriculture have sought to do just that."

And the answer of the President in his acceptance speech is an attempt to close the door of hope on that subject:

"No power on earth can restore prices except by restoration of general recovery and markets. Every measure we have taken looking to general recovery is of benefit to the farmer."

And that, if you please, is the record. That is what we have to expect from the present Republican leadership.

And I am not saying that of the fine rank and file of millions and millions of men and women who call themselves Republicans, I am talking about the present Republican leadership. What have we to expect from them? More Republican tariffs! Implacable opposition to any plan to raise the price of farm products. A program of "starving out" a third of the present production! A splendid prospect, that! Reduced to its lowest terms, the present administration is asking the farmers of the nation to put their interests into the hands of their bitterest opponents—men who will go to any and all lengths to safeguard and strengthen a protected few—men who will coldly say to the American farmers:

"One third of you are not needed. Run a race with bankruptcy to see which of you will survive."

THAT is no new theory of government. It has been reactionary policy since time immemorial. Help the few and perhaps in their generosity those few will be kind enough to help the many. I ask you, is that sound, is that fair, is that justice, is that American?

#### A Challenge

Industry never can prosper unless the agricultural market is restored and farm buying power returned. Without tariff readjustment, the President's program is hopeless. Without active assistance the Grundy schedules can break the farmer long before the farmer can find a market for his goods. It suggests that if industry revives, the farmer will be taken care of; though all of you know that the boom of 1929 brought nothing but lower prices and more debts to the farmer.

The situation today challenges every responsible statesman in America—challenges him to seek in agricultural circles an active remedial plan. The President of the United States has indicated his attitude in advance. His laconic, "I shall oppose them" closes the last door of hope in him.

I cannot share his view. I will not believe that, in the face of a problem like this, we must merely throw up our hands. I have unbounded faith in a restored, rehabilitated agriculture. In that profession of faith I invite you to join. May those of you who intend to find a solution—who decline the defeatist attitude—join tirelessly with me in the work of advancing to a better ordered economic life.

Friends, the time has come! The hour has struck!



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